

# 1897

## Pyne Library Praised

"Princeton had no separate library building until 1873, when the books belonging to the college collection were transferred to the Chancellor Green Library. This picturesque structure was designed in the form of a central octagon with two smaller octagons adjoining it on the north and south. The idea of the central octagon was evidently taken from the cathedral Chapter-house, as we see it developed in England, and was not any more than Gore Hall at Harvard copied from a structure originally intended to afford shelter to books and readers. The internal arrangements of the library were what one would expect in view of the exterior form. The librarian's desk was placed in the center directly beneath the octagonal lantern and the shelves for books were arranged in radiating lines extending to the walls. All of the interior finish was of wood and no attempt was made to render the building fireproof except on the outside. The quarters which were thus provided for the library were not very ample, and before twenty years had elapsed from the date of the construction of the edifice just described, the need of increased facilities became very obvious. In connection with the preparation for the sesquicentennial celebration of the university in 1896 some friend or friends of the college whose names were not announced, gave through the agency of M. Taylor Pyne, Esq., one of the trustees, the sum of \$600,000 for an extension of the library. Mr. William A. Potter, who was the architect of the old building, prepared the designs for the new, and work was begun in July, 1896. The north part of the extension is now almost ready for occupation and the re-modelling of the old building, which is to be used as a reference and working library, has been commenced. The new structure is a hollow quadrangle about 160 feet square on the outside, joined to the Chancellor Green building by a wing 50 by 25 feet. The sides of the quadrangle are forty feet through, exclusive of buttresses and minor projections. The Chancellor Green Library, says the university librarian, Mr. Ernest Cushing Richardson, in speaking of the plan of utilizing the old and new buildings together, is admirably adapted for a working library after the style of the Oxford Radcliffe, adapted to our special uses. It will contain about 25,000 volumes, not simply of strict reference books, but of all sorts of books, including select fiction and poetry, to which free access may be especially desirable. It contains beside three rooms, exclusive of basement, which are suitable for special work. The new building

contains a delivery room, 50 by 20, and a corresponding printing and binding room below, an exhibition room, 50 by 40, and ten rooms for administration, special collections, etc., an extra fireproof vault, 12 by 12, fifteen seminar rooms, and stack room for stacking 1,250,000 volumes, besides eleven basement rooms used for storage, ventilating machinery, storage battery, etc. Shelving for 500,000 volumes has been put in, but the rest of the stack room will only be shelved when these are filled. The whole building, old and new, has been fitted or refitted with the most approved systems of electric lighting, forced ventilation, electric elevators, etc. The stack is iron with glass floors, the shelves being of wood and having a grooved front which receives shelf labels and does away with the cumbersome label holders. The shelves are supported by set screws running in an iron channel and are perfectly adjustable. The delivery desk faces the main entrance from outside, the entrance to the Chancellor Green Library, and the entrance to the exhibition room, as well as that to the stack, at the same time, so that one person at the desk commands all entrances and reduces absolutely essential attendance for keeping open to the lowest possible figure. The administration rooms are arranged chiefly in two suites of three each, the northeast room on lower suite being the chief librarians room, the small one next to it the stenographers room, and the one between this and the archway being the ordering and receiving department. Books are delivered through a door under the arch into this room, where they are checked up with the order slips and sent up by electric elevator into the~ suite above, which is the general catalogue room and in which they pass from one point to another through the various cataloguing stages of accessions, catalogue proper, and shelf listing, and run out again on the elevator to the proper floor. A good deal of personal attention was given to the building and its details by Mr. Pyne, Mr. Junius S. Morgan, who has since become an associate librarian here, and by the librarian. As all of us had the liveliest interest in having the building practical as well as ornamental, we venture to think that it is in many respects unsurpassed for our purposes. I certainly venture to doubt whether there is any other library in America which for the amount invested, \$800,000 for the whole building, has as ample and convenient quarters, having regard both to storage and to use as we now have. From the ground plan of the library it appears that the stacks are contained in two long rooms at the north and south ends of the quadrangle, the connection between the south stack and the delivery desk being effected by a tunnel underneath the courtyard. This tunnel is connected at either end with an electric lift, and it is thought that the delivery can be managed quite as conveniently as if all the books were contained in a continuous book room. At present the south stack room is not needed, and the plan for handling the books which I have just described is prospective merely. The design of the exterior

reveals to some extent the uses which are made of the various interior spaces. The north and south sides of the quadrangle, which as I have just said are set apart for the storage of books, have long windows extending from the ground to the cornice, and the east and west sides, which are to contain seminar rooms, librarians quarters and administration rooms, are divided into two stories after the ordinary type of Oxford college buildings. Although both the old and new libraries are designed by the same architect, they are not in the same style, the modern building representing the late perpendicular Gothic, while the earlier building follows the decorated Gothic of the fourteenth century."

Willard, Ashton R. "College Libraries in the United States," *The New England Magazine* N.S. 17 (Sept. 1897 – Feb. 1898), p. 429-432.

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